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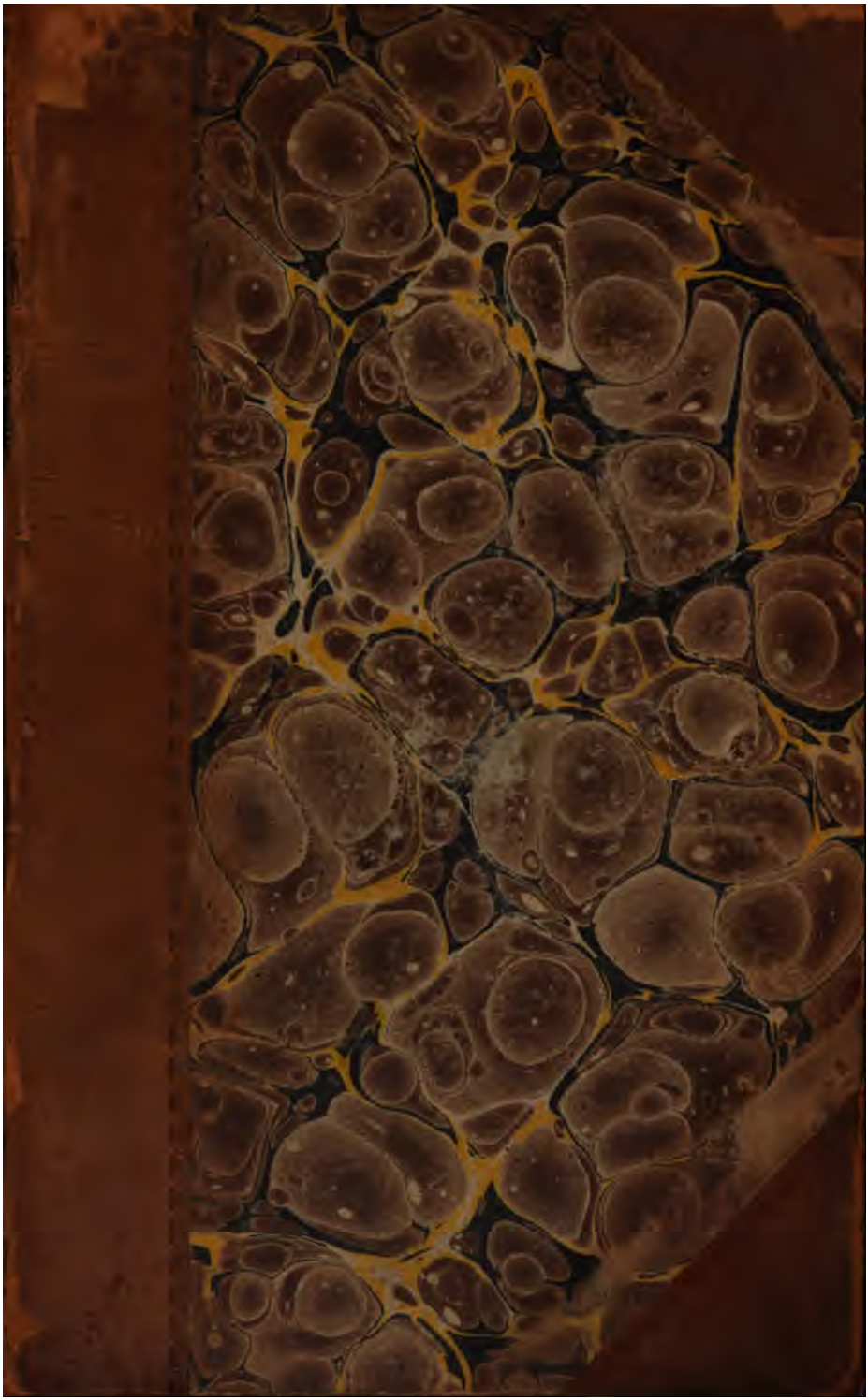

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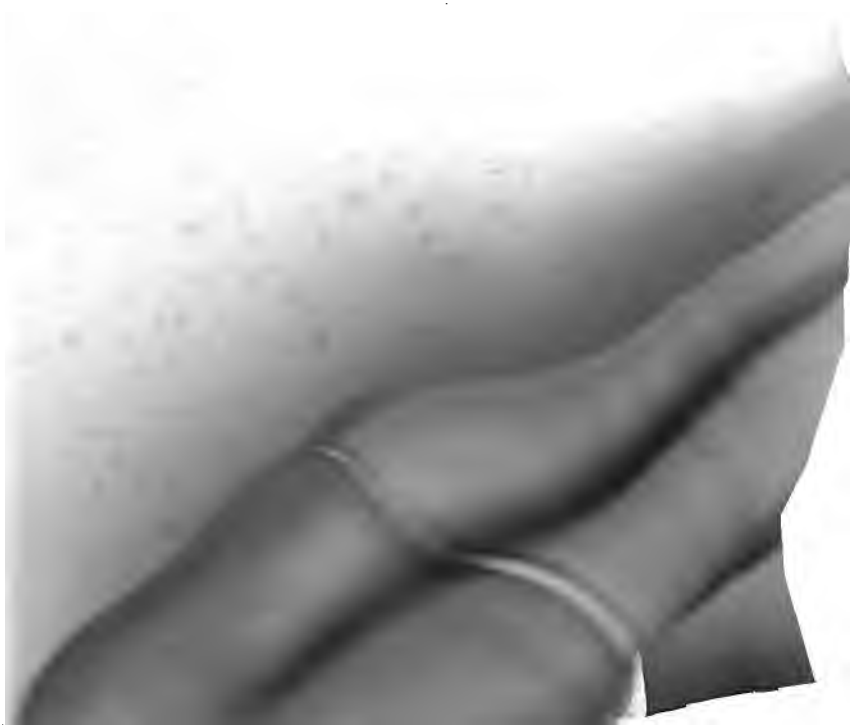

THE

MINSTREL WANDERER,

A POEM.

——— His the oppress'd, o'erlabour'd heart,
That ceased to beat, the look that made them start?
Could he, who thus had suffer'd, so forget,
When such as saw that suff'ring, shudder yet?
Or did that silence prove his mem'ry fix'd
Too deep for words, indelible, unmix'd
In that corroding secrecy, which gnaws
The heart to show th' effect, but not the cause?

BYRON.

BY

HENRY BRISTOWE ONYON.

LONDON:

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1833.

190.

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TO

CAPT. THOMAS BRISTOWE YOUNG, R.N.

THIS LITTLE WORK IS INSCRIBED,

AS A TRIFLING TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

FOR HIS MANY AMIABLE AND VIRTUOUS QUALITIES,

BY HIS OBLIGED YOUNG FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

OPINIONS or maxims that tend to extenuate our foibles, or flatter our intellectual faculties, like the reflexions of our mirror, are generally received with complacency and implicit faith, though perhaps neither the one nor the other exhibit an air of sense or a line of beauty; such, perhaps, is *here* the case. The three little narratives that compose this Poem, are founded on facts, and are presented to the reader under the following circumstances: I was showing a friend some poetry, that I had written upon various occasions, and he, fancying that a portion of it displayed some merit, persuaded me (without much difficulty, I grant,)

to select a *small* part, and publish it. In consequence of which I pared down a voluminous MS. to the size of the present work; and I now send it forth, as Green the æronaut despatches his little pilot balloon, to see *how the wind sets*, previous to embarking in a larger *inflation*; for, as Lopez de Vega says:

> " No es minima parte, aunque es exceso,
> De lo que está por imprimir lo impreso."

THE

MINSTREL WANDERER.

CANTO I.

THE

MINSTREL WANDERER.

CANTO I.

" Ahi! null' altro che pianto all' mondo dura!"

PETRARCH.

'TWAS summer time, the days were warm and bright,
All nature to rejoice appear'd, but yet
Heavy and cheerless was the Minstrel's heart;
As onward pac'd he, with a downcast eye,
And slow and falt'ring step; tho' not with age,
For two indictions yet he had not seen;
'Twas grief prey'd on his mind and vital strength.

Behind him, with a sober gloomy tread,
As imitative of the Wand'rer's pace,
Trod his companion and sole friend on earth,
His faithful spaniel Tray. The Minstrel had,
From causes all unknown, in anguish deep
A penance strict upon himself impos'd,
By solemn oath, to wander from his home,
(Or rather native place, for *home* he 'd none)—
A weary revolution of the earth
Around the sun, and one rotation more
On its own axis. He a second day
Beneath one roof remain'd not all the time;
His resting-place each night was far remov'd
From the night previous; apostolic like,
No scrip nor purse had he; slung at his back
A Cambrian harp he bore, with minstrelsy
His nightly host to cheer and to repay;
And oft his voice pathetic descant pour'd
In full concert. With none he e'er convers'd,
Except in song. His wishes and his wants
He sometimes wrote. His name was known to none,
But he by all was call'd "The Wanderer."
Shelter and food he never did require,

So much his minstrelsy and he were priz'd;
Tho' winter was to him a suff'ring time:
A few short weeks did now alone remain
To close the Wand'rer's twelvemonth and a day.
'Twas a mild fragrant eve, the sun his disc
Was now about to hide beneath the wave,
And things of lowest stature magnified
Their shadows on the ground. As 'tis in life,
When fortune sets to men of little minds,
Their face a lengthen'd shade and gloom eke forth,
Their very insignificance of form
Dilates in shadows so preposterous
That they alone their being indicate.
A lengthen'd journey o'er a lonely moor
That day he'd pass'd. A little village now
Did lay before him in the vale beneath.
The village-church, with steeple rais'd on high,
Seem'd as a beacon to his sun-dimm'd eyes,
To guide his weary frame to his night's rest.
What is so cheering to the sight of him,
Who far has travell'd over hill and dale,
And nought but flocks and herds have met his view,

As the lofty turret of the House of God?
It speaks of human habitations near,
Of Heav'n within and endless rest without,
In quiet, holy, consecrated earth.
The glorious orb that giveth warmth and life
To insect and to flow'r, to herb and tree,
That gives the changes of the seasons too,
In regular succession, now went down
To light and warm another hemisphere,
Leaving a light more pleasing far than day.
O gentle Eve! thy soft and pleasing shade,
That falls and throws a half-obscurity
O'er beauteous scenes, doth greatly them enhance.
Thou art e'en as the thin and pervious veil,
Thrown lightly o'er the face of loveliness,
Which heightens, by its partial mystery,
The half discover'd charms.
Tho' tir'd, our Minstrel quicken'd now his pace,
And soon the village outskirts he attain'd,
Some cottages he pass'd; a mansion old,
With lattic'd casements open'd to the breeze,
Attracted him. He stopp'd, his harp unloosed,
Uncover'd it, and tun'd the erring strings;
(Meanwhile his dog beside him laid himself.)

A few preluding chords he lightly swept,
Then thus in plaintive modulation sang.

" With worldly ills dejected and oppress'd,
Worn out my body, fill'd my mind with sadness,
Forgetfulness I wish, a mental rest—
Come death, oblivion, or even madness!
Hark! methinks I hear a voice
The air so tranquil cleave;
It bids me once again rejoice,
It bids me life to leave,
Its empty pleasures, transient joys—
It says it will me save
From worldly grief, disease, and noise
In slumber in the grave!—
O power supreme! then in the peaceful tomb,
Give me repose that man can rouse from never!
For my torn soul is fill'd with deepest gloom,
And Hope, alas! is fled from me for ever!"

Ere he his melancholy strain had clos'd,
The door was gently op'd, a female form
Within the portal was obscurely seen,

Seeming the lay's conclusion to await.
The notes had died away—and now stepp'd forth,
Clad in the dark habiliments of woe,
A matron with deportment dignified,
Her aspect sad, yet kindly and benign;
Mild resignation seem'd to have ta'en the place
Of that which had been wretchedness intense
In former days. Our Minstrel she desir'd
In accents grave, yet courteous and mild,
To enter and recruit his wearied frame.
He bow'd, took up his harp, and entered in,
Still follow'd by his dog. "Thy fame," said she,
"Hath travell'd far, and oft I've wish'd to hear
Thy justly celebrated minstrelsy,
And welcome art thou now. Refresh thyself
With what this house can give, and then, in sooth,
When thou hast rested, and thou art refresh'd,
I will entreat thee, Minstrel, once again,
To wake thy harp and voice to melody.
But, in saying this, let it not be thought,
That I, against all hospitable rites,
Would wish that thy repast be made in haste,
Or prematurely urge thee to renew
Thy minstrelsy with unrecruited strength.

Whate'er thou mayst require, it shall be brought!
We now will leave thee, and thy faithful dog,
To your refreshment, and to quietude."
Having thus said, the lady and her friend
(A maiden young and fair, a relative)
Immediately withdrew.
An hour had scarce elaps'd, when strains were heard
Forth issuing from th' apartment where
The Minstrel had been left. The lady then
Return'd accompanied, by her with whom
She had withdrawn. The Minstrel bent his head,
As if to thank his hostess for her cheer,
And kind consideration: but no word
Escap'd his lips. He then, as if to waive
All intercourse of kind colloquial,
A light allegro symphony commenc'd;
Then sang these words:

"How swift flies love unto its wane,
Through hours, and days, and years,
And whether they give doubt and pain,
Tormenting us with fears:
Or course unruffled, transient, vain,
They leave us nought but tears!

Aye, tears that scald and furrow as they run
Adown the cheek where joyous smiles late shone!

"In life the early dream of love
Is like the rose-bud sweet;
Its fragrant beauty far above
All flowers that we meet;
But ere we can its value prove,
Its leaves are 'neath our feet!
The genial warmth, that opes the bud so fast,
Casts to the earth—a record of the past!

"As 'cross a prison-window's space,
A spider's-web extends;
So 'thwart the current of my days
A meshy film impends,
Wove from past happiness' bright rays,
Nought in or outward bends;
Light or remote it be, 'twill strain a belt,
And in the centre be acutely felt!

"That *past* dwells in my heart, my brain,
And clings tenacious there,
Like musk's undying, sick'ning stain
Within the casket rare;

No other scent can e'er again
Its odour deep impair: [whelm—
The *scent's* but lost when waves the case o'er-
The *past* but fades when Death bursts Mem'ry's film!"

He paus'd—a silence long and deep
Ensued—with tearful eyes, the hostess rose,
And glow unusual. "Thy lay," said she,
In deepen'd tones, "hath call'd up scenes long past,
Acutely painful; in remembrance e'en,
I thought them buried to me for aye!
Yet tho' thou hast, like her of Endor, rais'd
The spirit of the mighty dead to view,
Nathless, accept my thanks, my warmest praise,
For thy most painful, pleasing poesie,
And instrumental skill. Possessing these
Talents pre-eminent, as thou appear'st to do,
Thy mind must highly cultivated be:
But wherefore always restrospective themes
Employ thee thus? Believe me, my good friend,
To those of sensibilities acute,
Nothing so undermining e'er can be,
As giving way to visions of the past!
Nought to the wretched so pernicious is,

As dwelling on the sources of their grief,
Or thinking of their former happiness:
Tho' *such* recurrences may serve to rouse
A mental suff'rer from his apathy;
Yet they are stimulants insidious,
And ultimately they will prove to be,
In all their nature, blighting, poisonous!
All animation caus'd by such fell means,
(How beneficial it may *seem* to be)
Is as delusive as the hectic glow,
That flushes brightly on consumption's cheek,
To stranger's eye;
And all exertion, from such cause produc'd,
Is as the writhing of the tortur'd trout
Upon an angler's line! Avoid it, then!
That thou hast talents I am well convinc'd,
And might be well employ'd; ease then, to me,
Thy heart of that which now oppresses it,
And bury it then in dark oblivion
For aye! Whence then arose this wand'ring life?
Whence this"—Ere she her question could conclude,
The Minstrel quickly, loudly struck his lyre,
And in a hurried measure, and wild air,
These verses utter'd in impassion'd tone:

"Speak not of that will make me farther stray;
Touch not a string that grates like bittern's boom;
Ask not for lightning to illume thy way;
But rather wander on in deepest gloom?

"My sorrow's cause departs not forth from me;
Within my breast, by vow, it is controll'd,
And its unfailing, gloomy source must be,
As Nilus' secret head to those of old!

"Thou, too, hast hidden sorrow in thy breast;
For when thy thought to yore I backward led,
Thy cheek was flush'd, thy tears were not repress'd,
Thou had'st a mem'ry of the buried dead!

"Didst thou not feel a pang thou canst not tell?
Was not thy soul in agony borne down?
Was not thy memory a torturing hell?——
Judge of my latent anguish by thine own!

"Acute's the loneliness we feel, and deep,
When flashes in our sight, and breaks our gloom,
Aught that reminds of those belov'd, who sleep
Alas! within the dark and mould'ring tomb!

"'Tis as the slumber-start of him who steals
A little pause in sleep, from deep distress;
He starts!—awakes!—and then, again, he feels
His utter misery and wretchedness!"

He ceas'd; and after some reflection she,
In soften'd accents, thus accosted him:
"Thou well divin'st; I have a secret grief,
Which once prey'd on my mind, and vital strength;
(As now thy torturing memory gnaws thee);
But Time, which, like the spear that Telephus
Had pierc'd, heal'd e'en the wound itself had brought
Of yore; Religion, too, hath given me
A peaceful resignation to His will!"
More she was about to say;
But seeing he had ta'en his shell again,
She paus'd awhile, as thus he sung:

"Light griefs the hand of time may tend t' efface—
Mere soiling pressures upon ductile clay;
But that deep woe, which fades the heart and face,
Time's length in deeper characters will trace,
But *never* wear the smallest part away!

" Like letters graven on a precious stone,
Is sorrow's stamp in man's unwav'ring heart;
But cause of stripling's whine, or maiden's moan,
By a wax impress may be fully shown:
The warmth that form'd will soon efface each part."

Ere yet the chords' vibration had surceas'd,
The lady rose, and the apartment cross'd;
Herself then seating by the Wanderer,
To this effect address'd him: " Minstrel, mine
Were no *light griefs*, nor wouldest thou, in sooth,
Have term'd them such, if thou hadst heard them told:
Here thou abide awhile, and let unfold
Each to the other tales of wretchedness.—
Thou shak'st thy head, denying me e'en this
Reciprocality of narrative.
Think not I'm anxious to reveal my woe,
Or curiously bent to list to thine.
No, my good friend! my motive is more pure:
But, for the present, let there be a truce
Upon this subject.
Thou pressest secretly unto thy breast
Some care corroding, like the Spartan youth
Conceal'd a fox, until it rent his heart!

Well, at some other time, perchance, thou wilt
Become my guest, and to my wish accede.
And, Minstrel, think thee that another's woe
May be acute as thine. Ne'er lightly speak
Again of "*maiden's moan!*" Hadst thou been here
A few months since, thou wouldst have then beheld
An instance eminent of female woe,
The trials, feeling, sufferings of a maid;
And such a maiden as this world not oft
Produces, touching amiability
And loveliness of person.
Her tale, in brief, I will to thee narrate,
And then, say thou whether her *griefs* were *light;*
And if, too, they "*mere soiling pressures*" were?
Poor Agatha! thy pois'ning memory,
That, like an evil spirit, haunted thee,
Is quiet now, as thine own pulseless heart!"

"Agatha Hebron first this village saw
Some twelvemonths since, a joyous, beauteous girl,
Highly accomplished, and not yet eighteen.
Her sire, a worthy, gallant officer,
Had from his regiment obtained short leave,
And with his daughter and her mother came

For quiet here, from noisy garrison,
And military duties wearisome.
(As well they might have gone for rest and ease
Beneath the poison-tree of Java's isle!)
And quietude perpetual they found—
For, in one vault they now repose!
But I anticipate——
There was a youth whose birth, endowments, wealth,
And handsome form, were all in keeping rare;
He was an orphan relative and ward
Of Colonel Hebron's, and had just obtain'd
An ensigncy, and in his guardian's corps.
Young Oswald Chesterton did fondly love,
And was as much belov'd by Agatha;
In short, they were betroth'd. He was requir'd
To join their little social family,
As early as he could, and daily was
Expected. They had ta'en a cottage small,
And scarcely in it had they been a week,
When that dread pestilential scourge,
That has o'erspread the surface of the globe,
As well in frigid as in calid climes,
Broke out, and spread its deadly influence
As burning embers by a tempest borne

Over an arid moor of peat and fern.
The first night of its awful presence here,
E'en whilst they made a preparation quick
To leave the place, the Colonel was attack'd,
And was, before the sun arose—a corpse!
A few hours previous, hope, tranquillity,
And happiness, each bosom tenanted.
Oh! what an awful change had now ta'en place!
Let those who calculate on coming bliss,
Temper their transports with the sob'ring thought
That ev'ry joy foretold is subject to
The sinuous contingencies of time!
Young Oswald on that very morn arriv'd,
Borne on the wings of hope and fondest love;
He came, and found his Colonel, guardian,
His oldest, kindest friend, his second sire,
The father of his Agatha, no more!
Dread was the shock: he would not be controll'd,
But, horror-struck, exhausted as he was
By travelling all night and previous day,
Would go and view the last remains of him
Who had been good and kind to him through life.
He stood beside, and gaz'd on the distort,
Livid, and pestilence-emitting corpse!

Worn out in mind and frame, and all aghast
At so unlook'd-for, horrible event,
He, fainting, fell upon the lifeless form,
And when he was, at length, arous'd to sense,
'Twas found he'd caught the dread contagion:
He, before night, expir'd! Ah, Agatha!
No tongue can what thou suffer'dst e'er depict.
Thou and thy mother all attack escap'd.
Escap'd! Yes, ye escap'd disease and sudden death,
And suffer'd martyrdom; long, ling'ring days
Of agony! The mind being plac'd, as 'twere,
Upon a rack's excruciating stretch.
At first, she neither wept, nor spoke, nor look'd!
She seem'd but as a breathing waxen form:
At length her eyes grew sensible, her breast
Heav'd sigh, and sob, and groan—then tears.
Have you e'er seen the tender ball of sight,
Sore punctur'd by a thorn, emitting fast,
As erst did from our bless'd Redeemer's side,
Water and blood—a stream of agony?
Such were th' excruciating scalding tears,
Life in slow torture ebbing as they flow'd,
That the ill-fated broken-hearted maid,
Poor Agatha, in utter hopelessness,

Shed all the day; and when the time of rest,
Night, that dispens'd oblivion to all,
Save Agatha, arriv'd, still no repose;
It came with dreams of wretchedness and bliss,
Alternate yet unceasing—now rolling
Separate, now each the other following,
Now mingling and uniting into one,
Like surges on the beach at flowing tide.
Yet, though but dreams, her bliss and misery
Were heightened 'yond all possibility,
And strangely mingled by the fantastic brain,
Into a pleasing dreadful state of being,
That marr'd all sleep. Alas! poor Agatha,
What state on earth more suffering than thine?
Of thy lov'd parent, in the midst of hopes
Most pleasing, thou wast suddenly bereav'd.
Thy lover, too, most prematurely snatch'd,
For ever, from thee!—he whose love for thee
Was fond, devoted, centred deep and fix'd;
To the exclusion of thy young, fair friends,
Who envied thee, unceasingly, thy lot!
Who now would envy thee?—when he, thy first,
Last, only lover, was for ever lost,
And lost in such a manner horrible?

He whose form, 'twould be no boast to say,
Had in fair Nature's noblest mould been cast.
His speaking eye, expressive countenance,
On which had feasted many a maiden's eyes,
In admiration hopeless as devout,
Now fed and fattened in the mould'ring grave,
That loathsome offspring of putridity
The worm! And thou, poor hapless maid, alive
To muse upon that thought!
Thy widow'd mother too,—for as yet thy cup
Of misery was fill'd not to the brim;
She, from the first, had been quite paralyzed,
Her features had become, in one short day,
Quite old, her face all rigid, and her eyes,
Without expression gaz'd; she, helpless as
A new-born babe, did, day succeeding day,
Recline upon her couch. In this sad strait,
To thee, poor hapless maid, no friends were near,
Thy heart-struck mother sinking in the grave;
And e'en the home, in which thy days of youth,
And joy, and love were spent, wast thou far from!
In this sad exigence I waited not
For form and ceremonious heartlessness,
I had them hither brought without delay,

From their drear friendless dwelling, hateful made
By painful circumstance.
Their trials and afflictions first taught me
To meditate less deeply on my own.
Poor Agatha! earth and its empty joys
Had nothing to tempt thee to live an hour,
But rather to create a deep disgust
Of them, a ceaseless wish to die! To her
There was a horrid stillness in the world,
A calmness fearful, supernatural,
Such as succeeds a lengthened hurricane
At sea; and her despair and feelings like
To those who have surviv'd the storm, and have,
In midst of silence most profound, their ears
All rack'd, and bursting with the noise and din
Of tempest past, and are slow perishing
Cold, starving, hopeless on the half-sunk wreck!

* * * * * *

Can famine, earthquake, madness, pestilence,
Intestine war, or carnage, Egypt's plagues,
The flood of Noah, or Gomorrah's fire,
Inflict more pangs, of a corporeal kind,
Than this poor maiden suffered mentally?
And, as far as we with worldly sense can judge,

Unmerited—that is, she was of crime
Devoid, and virtues numberless she had.
——————— When we see one
So young, so lovely, and beloved by all,
And yet so sore beset with worldly ills,
It is almost sufficient to dispel,
Or shake at least, our trust in Virtue's shield;
To make us sceptical of Providence,
His omnipresence, and his attributes
Of pity, mercy, and benevolence.
Inflictions so severe, and trials hard
As hers were, are enough to make us think,
That there are hours in which the Evil One
Has power o'er man, how virtuous and good
So e'er he be. But, human destiny 's
A mystery, an enigma none on earth
Can solve. *We* only can discern and judge
From outward circumstance, and all beyond
Our ken impenetrable darkness is,
And doubtless 'tis a mercy that 't is so.
Our nature teems with bold rebellious thoughts,
And weak, blind arrogance and ignorance,
And which most eminently are displayed,
When we presume to question or to doubt

The mercy of Creation's God! ———
But to conclude my tale ———
Here then they came, and I attended them;
The mother, in her listless state, was borne
To bed at once,—and Agatha, all wan
And wasted to the bone, did follow soon,
And laid her down beside her parent sole;
And from that couch she never rose again!
The mother first expir'd, and then the maid
Seem'd satisfied her duty was all done;
Her soul, appearing as for that event
Alone, she'd lingered here so long, took flight!
——————— But, oh!
The agony that Agatha endur'd,
By horrid dreams and dreadful phantasies!
Hour after hour, I 've watch'd beside her couch
To rouse her when she suffer'd much in sleep.
Could any situation be more dread?
All day regrets and retrospective thoughts,
Causing acute and heartfelt misery;
And all the night, in unrefreshing sleep,
Visions arose to bless and blast her sight,
Phantasmagoric and Elysian scenes,
Despoiling life of e'en the balm of rest!—

Her tale is told ———————

* * * * * *

* * * * * *

Whence, Minstrel, and what are those horrid dreams,
So much like substance and reality,
Yet less of real form than fleeting clouds?
Hast thou e'er reason'd on Dreams' mystery,
Their retrospective and foretelling form,
Their bless'd and curs'd illusions, quality,
Their origin, component parts and end?
That look bespeaks thou hast!
Nay, do not draw thy harp again to thee,
I do not wish a replication now,
I will not so severely tax thy skill.
The hour is late, and thou must wearied be;
To night no more of converse will I have,
Nor yet of minstrelsy; so to thy couch
Repair, and may refreshing balmy sleep
Await thy frame. Adieu!" ———

When in the morning the lady had aris'n,
She quickly sent to bid the Minstrel come
And take his morn's repast alone with her,
As she had much of import to impart.

The servant went, and hastily returned,
And said, untenanted his chamber was,
That he and dog were no where to be seen.
Upon the table, in his room, he'd left
A letter thus, with pencil superscrib'd,
"*To my kind hostess of the evening past.*"
The lady hastily the paper op'd,
And found the substance of the letter thus—
"Lady most worthy and benevolent,
Accept my warmest, my most grateful thanks,
For thine attentive courteous demeanour.
In thee I've met with more true sympathy,
For my deep-rooted hidden misery,
Than I have yet experienc'd throughout
A twelvemonth's wandering, tho' ev'ry night
I chang'd my cheer, my shelter, and my host.
Lady, with thee, but for my vow, I would
With greatest willingness, nay, almost joy,
Have sojourn'd for awhile. Thus far, at least,
I promise thee, that should my company
And minstrelsy be deem'd equivalent
To consequent great inconvenience
My presence would create, that, when my vow
Expires, a few weeks hence, I will return,

And will with thee abide. Then, not being mute
As now, I will entreat thy history,
And, should it be your wish, my own relate.
I 'll now to your interrogation turn
Respecting dreams. 'Twas thus your question ran—
——— 'Whence, and what are those horrid
dreams,
So much like substance and reality,
Yet less of real form than fleeting clouds?'
Let us, then, reason on the point.———
The maxims of philosophers affirm,
That dreams are waking visions of the soul!
Why, then, are they imperfect and deceptive?
Why carry our imagination far
Beyond what 's probable or possible
To be expected by our human means?
And if 'tis true, that dreams are thoughts o'th' soul,
Which soul ne'er stops, nor ceases to exist,
How is it, then, some persons never dream;
For when the body is enwrapt in sleep,
Life, reason, soul seem also to repose,
And, for a time, oblivion exists?
The cause?—In human structure doth it lie—
The different formation, moulding of

Th' organic powers?—If 'tis possible,
That sleep can sink the soul into complete
Oblivion as oft the *senses* are,
Where 's then the soul in that short interval?
Does the soul sleep? Is it material,
And doth require rest?———
——— Some writers do affirm,
That soul and reason are synonymous:
If so, the soul has age, and doth increase
With the scarce sensible and new born child!
Where is the soul of hapless lunatics?
Does the soul go mad? Where too is the soul
Of senseless drunkards? — Can wine o'ercome the soul?
Of idiots and brutal savages, whose reason 's less
Than that of instinct in some animals?
In fits and trances, whither goes the soul?
You 'll say, what has my present argument
About the soul to do with dreams? Much,
I reply! Some assert, and try to prove,
That dreams are glimmerings of reason; that
The guilty soul reveals ofttimes in sleep
Its foul and evil deeds. Admit it, and
What then?—It does not prove, or even show,

That dreams are waking visions of the *soul!*
They 'll tell you too, that oft somnambulists,
When quite enfolded in the arms of sleep,
Have their perceptive organs as awake,
And, in some cases, sharpen'd, amplified;
They 'll ask, reply, seem'd too absorb'd in thought,
And oft in sleep, thro' perils safely go,
They would have ne'er attempted, if awake,
And it is said of one, that in his sleep,
A page entire of Greek he did correct,
Yet knew not of it when he was arous'd! *
This is their *proof*, that dreams are glimmerings
Of reason;—that dreams are man's undying soul,
(Or spirit, mind, intellect, or reason,)
In active operation?—I have seen
Dogs, and no doubt that there are other brutes,
When fast asleep, to all appearance *dream;*
And in support of which, I merely name
The low, faint bark and growl, else whine and moan,
With other signs, which I have noticed oft,
Of inward perturbation in their sleep.
——— Some men there are,

* Johannes Oporinus, a printer. Vide Oxberry's Dramatic Biography, vol. II. p. 262.

Who give no credence to philosophers,
Yet neither solve, nor try to comprehend
Whence are, and for what purpose dreams arise,
Merely content themselves to think, that dreams
Are caused by adventitious circumstance.
How is it then, that Providence all things
Rules, (which they will readily admit), yet
Make dreams, and what, to them, seem minor things,
Th' effect of *chance*, and thereby deem all such
As quite unworthy of His care or knowledge.
What has been, is, and will be, God's acquainted with,
They 'll also equally admit; how is it, then,
That thus they idly speak of *chance*, when by
Ulterior admissions they will prove,
That all things, from the first, by th' Eternal
Have been foreknown, predestin'd, and ordain'd?*

* * * * * *

The cause and nature of our dreams appear
To me proceeding from the vap'ry fumes
Of a disorder'd stomach, which rising up

* Eph. i. v. 4, &c.; also Eph. iii. v. 9, &c.

Thro' channels all distemper'd and contract,
(As steam thro' clogg'd, inverted colander;)
Are then presented to the speculum
Of the obscure, the drowsy, sleeping brain
In a refracted, unconnected form;
And each successive cloud of fume but tends
To dim, suffuse the mental mirror more.
Ebriety 's on the same principle,
A dream, a curs'd, pernicious dream!—You 'll say,
Ofttimes when healthy is the frame, in sleep
Dreams will arise.—Assuredly they will;
But, either from a tender conscience, or
A nervous, much excited memory;
When, tho' the body sleeps, and all is peace
Around, the brain a constant quivering,
Like aspen-leaf in still calm weather, has;
But as the brain 's not then connected with,
Nor aided by the senses, the mind but acts
Imperfectly. The usual recumbent state
In which we sleep, beneath a mass of wool
And linen, ever must conduce to cause
Profuse sudation, swelling of the veins
And glands, disturbed, uneasy sleep, and thence
Thick, crowding dreams. These, I conjecture, are

Their cause, their nature, and their origin;
But, for their end—why, and wherefore are they?
This is beyond the fathoming of man!
——————————— Dreams,
Trances, madness, idiotcy, as well as
Other enigmas philosophers can't solve,
Doubtless, in perfect wisdom, were ordain'd
By him, the cause of every effect,
For no effect exists without a cause,
Tho' *we* don't plainly see it. Why should we,
With our imperfect, bounded intellect,
Aspire to comprehend the source of works
Perform'd by the great architect of all,
And querulously, blasphemously cry,
'Wherefore is this?' As well we might attempt
To reach the ocean's bed with twine and stone,
As try, with our short, feeble chain of sense,
To fathom his immense, stupendous depth
Of reason, majesty, and pow'r supreme!
How many thousand *human* sciences,
Arts and inventions, languages and laws
Of nations are there, we can't comprehend,
And never could, tho' we devoted all
Our life to them, and all facilities,

That man can give, were granted unto us.
And yet, we seek to know the origin
And end of each minute and mighty work
Done by Omniscience and Omnipotence!
We should when lost in wonder and amaze
At His eternal, vast, and complex works,
(Tho' some abound in mystery and some
Incongruous *seem* to us,) pause and think,
That wisdom infinite had been their source.
We, therefore, should restrain all prying thoughts,
And view them all in admiration mute,
And for His blessings and beneficence,
With boundless, ceaseless gratitude adore
Their Author! ——————
——— Lady most good and kind,
Mayhap you think, that my assumptions are
By no means a solution—but can I
Solve that which is inexplicable? Dreams
Are by man insoluble! Ne'ertheless,
Supposing they were *not*—should we gain aught
By knowledge of their origin and end,
Unless we had the power to suppress,
Or turn their course, when they assum'd a dread
And harassing dominion over us,

Or tended to produce disorder'd nerves? ——
But I must now conclude. Reflecting thus,
In speculative and assumptive thoughts,
As I have done, too oft involves us more
In anxious and perplexing contemplation.—
—— Lady, farewell! a few weeks hence,
Expect again to hear my lay.—The choice
Of waiving or accepting my design
Of sojourning with thee will then be put
In such-wise as will leave you free to act,
Without your being driven to adopt,
(Supposing you regret the invitation giv'n)
A verbal or a written negative;
A course as well avoided in such case
As being most unpleasant to us both.
Farewell! may comfort and may happiness
Be your companions thro' life's ev'ry stage!"

* * * * * *

* * * * * *

—— A month had near elapsed
Since the departure of the wanderer.
The lady had, with anxious feelings, look'd
For his return for some days past. She fear'd
That he, from motives purely delicate,

Would not approach her habitation near
To sound his lyre, lest it might seem
As loud, as peremptory, and as free
As summons at a door by creditor,
Or announcing of distinguish'd visitor.
She dreaded, too, his strains not being heard
By her, might by him, into unwillingness
Of his intended sojourn construed be.
Her ears were now each minute on the stretch,
And ev'ry distant sound was eager caught,
And servant quick despatch'd to learn its cause;
But ne'er a Harper had as yet appear'd.
Another week now pass'd away, which brought
The eve of good St. James. The lady was
In th' apartment where she usual sat,
The same as that in which the Minstrel was,
Attended by her fair and youthful friend.
The casement was thrown open, to admit
More easily each sound. She a seat
Took by the window, and in deepest thought
Seem'd buried for a time. "No sound," said she,
"Of minstrelsy can, far or near, be heard.
I greatly fear that he, ere this, has been
Thro' our small village, and we 've heard him not.

I would not wish him think, by any means,
That he would otherwise than welcome be,
For, should he so imagine, I must seem
To him replete with deep hypocrisy,
After the earnest feeling I express'd,
Touching his present state of wretchedness,
And future welfare. You may deem, mayhap,
My tender and affectionate young friend,
That deepen'd much is my anxiety
For him, by that inherent quality
So long unto our sex attributed;
And to be candid with you, Marianne,
My anxious thoughts are deeply tinctur'd with
A curiosity excited high
To learn the cause of his dejected state;
To hear his minstrelsy and poesy
Original again. What could have led
To such deep-rooted grief? Alas! what cause
Could have produc'd upon his memory
So desolating, lasting an effect?
Could he suppose, I cannot truly feel
For such a hopeless misery as his?
Pity alone, I most sincerely think,
From those who have the power to relieve,

Is more humiliating, galling more
To them who have been most unfortunate,
And are distress'd, and supplicate relief,
Than a denial harsh, or e'en reproach;
Their pity 's insincere, 'tis mockery!
But pity such as *this*, is to be seen
In selfish or in servile minds alone.
I trust my mind is free from either stain.
Some have I seen, despite of Nature's voice,
Laugh at a tale of deepest misery
To check commiseration's kindly glow,
And within an hour the self-same tools
Would even bite their lips to agony
Their laughter to suppress in presence of
A great man's solemn follies and mistakes.
Pity needs no expression of the tongue
To make it evident. The tone of voice,
Nay, the eye alone, fully will inform
If pity in the heart be truly felt.
They, who have really nothing to bestow
In alms, on the distress'd and desolate,
May oft, by sympathy, deep misery
Conduce to mitigate: they, likewise, might
Employ their influence with ev'ry friend,

Who has the power to help.
There is no custom more absurd than that,
Which oft induces men to tarry till
An opportunity occur for them
To exercise, on an extensive scale,
Their kindly feelings of benevolence,
When by a trifling, *present* charity
They might have hinder'd after-deeds of crime!
How many, with such views, from day to day,
Their virtuous intentions have postpon'd,
Till death has slowly or has sudden come,
And they, in vain intentions, have breath'd out
Their life. How bitter, then, in their last hour,
Have been their shame, regret, and deep remorse,
That all their days had been a waste of time,
As far as charity had been concern'd.
But who is there that can delineate
The genial glow within, th' extatic pride,
The calm, the pure, the tranquil, blessed feel,
The soul's dilation and the rapt'rous state
Of him who has, by tender sympathy,
By charity and mild benevolence,
Rescued a fellow-creature from distress
And misery—has rais'd despair to hope?

The honest feelings that pervade *his* breast,
Confer a happiness more durable,
More pleasing to the searching conscience far
Than hero's laurels, or a million's cheers!"
"Think you not," observ'd the maiden young,
"That the few instances of ready help
And kindly offices from relatives,
Friends and acquaintance, chiefly from this cause
Arise,—that we are much too apt t' impute
Their offers of assistance or advice
(Made with alacrity or anxiousness),
To interested or officious views?"
"It may be so," rejoin'd the elder dame;
"But, if we were too much to entertain
An apprehension that our tender'd aid
Would have a misinterpretation put
Upon it, instances of ready help
Would yet become more rare than they are now.
Mistrust its baleful influence extends,
In some degree, o'er ev'ry family
And tribe. The ill effects, the folly of
Mistrust is most conspicuously seen
In heads of households towards menials;
In no direction possible could it

Be more impoliticly exercised.
Suspicious, proud demeanour often makes
A servant reckless of his character,
Indifferent of pleasing them he serves,
And by degrees he cunning, indolent,
And fraudulent becomes—then ruin'd—lost!
Whereas, had kindly confidence been us'd,
Faithful and valuable unto the last
He might have been.
If trust and mildness will not tend to make
A servant of integrity and worth,
Rely upon it that severity,
Suspicion, or hauteur will never do 't;
For if a master act with e'er so much
Of vigilance and caution towards one
He thinks not trusty, yet that servant will
Employ evasion and duplicity,
In equal and proportionate degree,
To counteract his master's vigilance.
Kindness works miracles on vulgar minds.
————How much good of divers kinds
May heads of families devise and do,
By precept and example virtuous,
If they were but inclin'd, and method had.

They have the pow'r to make the little state,
O'er which they hold control, a commonwealth
Of unaffected, pure benevolence.
They 'd learn to judge of one another's faults
With mild compassion; and by being taught
To comprehend how weak our nature is,
They would with *mercy* other's frailties view;
Not merely their's alone, who then compos'd
Their own domestic sphere, but also their's,
Who may chance intersect the orbit of
Their life's much varied intercourse.
How much illiberality, how much
Recrimination, anger, and offence
Might be avoided in our earthly path,
And how much fitter should we be for Heav'n,
If parents would this hallow'd system use!
But, ah! the social bond that should unite
Each member of a family, is oft
Asunder burst by pride and selfishness
In those on whom parental rule devolves,
And whom a tigress would example set!
What more revolting is there to a mind
Lib'ral and gen'rous, than be forc'd to view
Mutely a parent or a member of

A family, use his or her command
In an unfeeling and despotic way?
What 's there in nature more detestable
Than pow'rless to observe the happiness,
The comforts, pleasures, and amusements of
Both sexes, young and old, of families
Subservient to the whims or tyranny
Of one domestic, vile Caligula?
But I am wand'ring from the subject far
I started with. The subtile, vap'rous links
Of the ideal chain so quickly close
And join, that ere we have had time to pause
And think, a lengthen'd series has been form'd
Of thoughts made palpable by words or deeds!
But, to the Minstrel once again: think you,
My fair young friend, that he has misconceiv'd
My nature, or that he his promise now
Repents? What more discomfort gives than doubt
And apprehension? Though coming events,
That in their nature are agreeable
In the anticipation, quickly drag us on
Along the path monotonous of life;
Our minds are as the pond'rous weight attach'd
Unto the forming, twisting cable, which

The shorter it becomes, more quick and strong
It draws unto the goal prescribed.
Surely the Minstrel can have ne'er forgot
His promise. He, perchance, upon a bed
Of grievous sickness languishing reclines.
Mayhap——but I am weary of surmise——
If he"——"List, Madam, list!" the maiden cried,
"I hear afar a well-remember'd sound!
It is a harp! It is the Minstrel's hand!"
The lady hurried from the room, and bade
A servant go and reconnoitre close;
"And if it be," said she, "the Wanderer,
Ne'er suffer him to go beyond your sight:
And should he but attempt to leave the place,
Without his coming hither, give him this note!
Haste, and begone!"——
—— But a few minutes had elaps'd
When back the servant came and said
The Minstrel and his dog now coming were
Unto the house. Scarce had the servant spoke,
When, just beneath the window he arriv'd,
And swept the strings in complex harmony.
He play'd a plaintive symphony, then gave
This sacred song, as if to celebrate
The vigil of St. James. The lady would

Have sent to make request that he at once
Would enter in; but she'd been told, that he
Ne'er liked an interruption in his lay;
Therefore she paus'd in mute attention, till
The verses following quite ended were:

Woe is a passing cloud,
And joy a flash of light,
Life is a winter's day,
And death a summer's night!

'Woe is a passing cloud,'
Now coming o'er—now gone;
It shades both low and proud—
The cottage and the throne.

'Joy is a flash of light,'
Our earthly path t' illume:
The gleam that is most bright
E'er leaves the deepest gloom.

'Life is a winter's day;'
'Tis stormy, short, and dark,
With scarce a peering ray
To cheer the vital spark.

'Death is a summer's night,'
A twilight still, serene,
Woe's cloud and joy's bright light
Are as they'd never been.

That night 's a *name*—no more—
For it has darkness none;
So Death is—Life's day o'er—
Eternity begun!

Then why for such joy toil?
And why for such woe care?
Life love? from death recoil?
If they so fleeting are?

Ah! 'tis our after-state,
Our only care should be,
When Time shall have no date—
The dread Eternity!

To fit us we must flee
The clogging paths of guilt,
And our whole trust must be
In the Almighty built.

Works must our *Faith* evince
In Him on whom we call;
Hope to o'ercome all sins,
Use *Charity* to all!

Woe is a passing cloud,
And Joy a flash of light;
Life is a carnal shroud,
And Death a rapid flight.

Then the glorious sun, the soul,
Earth's darkness having riv'n,
Will burst beyond control
And mount up into heav'n!"

——————— The lady, when
His strains were clos'd, forth from her house did go,
To him she gave her hand, and thus address'd:
"Minstrel, thou'rt welcome back. I've been in doubt
These some days past, if I should see thee more;
And happy am I, that my anxious doubts
Are by your presence dissipated thus.
All for your sojourn with me is prepar'd;

So, without ceremony or delay,
Enter my dwelling, as thou would'st thine own.
I grieve to see thee looking still more wan
And wasted than before, when thou wast here.
But come, why tarriest thou? Enter and rest!"
"Lady," the Minstrel said, "I follow thee!"
So having said, his harp within he bore,
Whilst close behind him kept his faithful dog.
Being now seated, the Wand'rer spoke her thus:
"I will not offer to thee empty thanks;
I feel you wish them not. I hither came
Your friendly invitation to accept,
In the same frank, unostentatious tone,
In the same spirit, independent, free,
In which you urged your hospitality
On me. By such unceremonious line
Of conduct, we may both appear to those
Who study worldly usages, beyond
The pale of recognized society;
Nay, deem'd we may be quite unciviliz'd!
But unto *me* their censure or their praise
Is as the stingless hiss of brooding duck,
Or cackle of a goose unto my dog.
The observations of the virtuous

Will nought of malice or of spite contain,
Will ne'er the least uncharitable be.
The sneering, scornful ridicule of vice
I never heed. Slander and calumny
Are ever attributes of vicious minds;
And nought in nature more reminds me of
A slanderer, than a blowfly, vile and base,
Which loudly *buzzes* as it flies along,
And *taints* where'er it tarries to refresh!"
"I, too, have learnt," the lady now rejoin'd,
"To hold all those opinions of the world
Founded in prejudice illiberal,
Or in preposterous, low-minded thoughts,
As lightly as a British Protestant
Esteems the Roman Pontiff's interdict.
If, then, thou have no settled plan of life,
Let this be thine abode till thou hast fix'd
On some design to occupy thy time
To more advantage. Ignorant am I
How far misfortune has affected thee,
And what thy means. Perchance concocted plans
Thou hast in view; if so, deem me not rude
In offering this. I feel that premature,
Abrupt, and e'en indelicate I've been;

And so no more proposals will I make
Until I've heard thy narrative, and know
Thy circumstance in life. To-morrow I
To thee my gloomy story will relate.
This night we'll dedicate to harmony
And cheerful converse, as preceding Lent
The modern Romans keep their Carnival.
But first, thou and thy faithful spaniel must
Refreshment take—and see a servant comes
To say it only your partaking waits."

The meal was past; they now return'd
To th' apartment where remain'd the harp.
After some converse, short, desultory,
The Minstrel once again pour'd forth his soul
In song, premising unto this effect:
" This day's the natal anniversary
Of one who alway stedfast kept my friend,
In ev'ry trial; she, tho' far away,
I cease not to remember gratefully."

TO MARIANNE.

O! when will Fate relentless cease to goad,
To persecute and drive her car o'er me,
Like harrow o'er the unresisting toad,
Who ne'er from pain and trouble is set free,
Till when transfix'd beneath the iron load,
He, with whom all on earth do disagree,
Dies and relinquishes a life of care,
Which had become too burthensome to bear!

Tho' much depressed am I by misery,
Never can I pass by thy natal day,
Which had I ne'er have known, or it, or thee,
I had not liv'd till now to pour this lay,
But mould'ring in the tomb I now should be
To fell misfortune and to grief a prey.
O! thou hast been to me in bleakest hour
As ray of sunshine to the op'ning flower!

Then, as this day doth one more year commence,
O! may it be much happier than the last,
May you ne'er meet that torturing suspense,
That has beset your path these some years past,

May Providence to you good health dispense,
May bounteous fortune in your scale be cast,
May peace and comfort, wheresoe'er you roam,
Dwell ever in that place you make your home!

[He paus'd awhile ———
Then with a change of measure and of air,
Again proceeded, still addressing her
He had before.]

O! for the blissful time when first I met thee
Revelling in health and gay and blooming youth!
When nought but mirth and joyous hours beset thee,
Thine eyes beaming love, and purity, and truth.

When those, now dead gone, lov'd and caress'd thee,
Ere wealth and happiness were yet from us rent;
When for thy filial love thy fond parents blessed thee,
As you o'er their couch in solicitude bent:

When, by the moonlight, the bugles' note floating
Across the calm water's face, we us'd to hear;

When by the fish-stream time fled without noting,
In that Eden-garden so cherish'd and dear.

Or when in the boat, thy flageolet playing;
We floated amidst the water-lilies' bloom;
Or morn till eve in shady bowers staying,
'Mid roses', and violets', and jasmines' perfume.

But ah! why those scenes recal, now fled for ever?
Yet, in my mind and soul will still linger some,
Nor pleasures, nor opiates can my thoughts sever
From those youthful joys, which shade all those to come!

Mute are those bugles—chok'd the fishing-stream now—
Laid waste the garden—the jasmines rent away—
Thy youth, health, and mirth, have *all* prov'd a dream now,
And sickness and sorrow have absolute sway!

——————— "Why ever thus
Brood o'er thy misery?" the lady said;
I wish'd this night all cheerfully to pass.
Despondency assists the progress of

Disease; and that thy health is undermin'd
Needs not thy tongue's complaint. Come,
Lend me thine instrument, and I 'll essay
That which I formerly did practise much,
And greatly did delight in in my youth,
The Improvisatore's subtle art.
Imagine not I think to rival thee
In skill of hand, or voice, much less of mind!"

If fell disease afflict thee sore,
Should care corrode to thine heart's core,
And dread suspense its cup outpour,
Joy yet may be for thee in store,
Bear them all with resignation!

What feels the slave, that sold for dross?
And he that 's wreck'd, and surges toss?
Think of the hapless widow's loss!
And our Redeemer on the cross!
And let such rouse emulation!

"Gnarling sorrow hath no pow'r to bite
Them who shall mock and bear it light;" *

* Shakspeare.

Stem, then, disease with all thy might,
And it will quickly turn in flight,
And cease its molestation!

Strive hard whilst pow'r is left to thee,
Shake off despair and lethargy—
My constant, fervent pray'rs shall be
Address'd to Heav'n for its decree
To speed thy restoration!

——— "I do entreat thee, give not way
To melancholy thoughts! Remember, *He*,
That sent us earthly comforts, blessings, joys
Sent them for us to use, and not refuse
In discontent, in fear, or scorn; be not like
The Japanese, Hindoos, or Juggernauts,
Who blinded, bigotted, illiterate
Do torture slowly, needlessly themselves
By fast and fire, by penance and by scourge!—
Nought is there so distressing to the mind,
When in affliction, or misfortune fall'n,
As the reflection that our misery
Was by our wilful, wild deportment caus'd;

But if thou feel'st that thy whole conscience is
Of such offences void, mourn not as those
Of hope without. Reject not cheerful thoughts—
Nor discontent, nor visionary be—
The former brightest objects seems to view,
As we thro' dull, smok'd glass look at the sun;
Whilst, on the other hand, the latter seems
To view all trifling, worthless objects in
A solid and a prepossessing form,
As children see thro' a kaleidescope
Small trumpery beads and bits of broken glass.
Contentment ever an abundance forms,
But an abundance does not make content;
Let but a man, no matter in what sphere
He be, meet boldly the unpleasantries
And exigencies of his state in life,
And he 'll o'ercome, or nullify them all!
Those cheerful feelings, charitable thoughts,
Which seem, at times, to actuate some men
To put a face of brightness e'en upon
Object or circumstance of gloomy cast,
Seem offerings the most desirable,
That could be tender'd to an all-just God!
Such, at all events, we may be well assur'd,

Can ne'er be unacceptable to Him,
Who knows our nature, and our frailties all.
They who possess such amiability,
They that are so harmoniously dispos'd,
May properly assimilated be
To those, who healthful medicines extract
From herbs unsavory and noxious weeds.
To me it ever odious has appear'd
To see a man (I pray you understand,
I mean not *you* to tax with such offence)
Bear *discontent* in mind and countenance
Amid gay festivals, or when appears
A prospect beautiful, or when abounds
Serene, delightful weather, or e'en when
That little children play and prattle loud,
In all the gaiety of infant innocence:
His spirit fretful, captious, wearisome,
Like pilgrim Christian's burthen, goes with him
Where'er he goes, till in the sepulchre
'Tis lost!———But what injustice to mankind
Is his ill-humour, and his discontent;
What senseless, base ingratitude to Him,
Our great, beneficent Creator!

* * * * *

Grieve not immoderately for joys,
That ne'er, by human art, can be recall'd.
The hours of life fleet fast; let, therefore, those
That now remain be usefully employ'd—
We live not for ourselves alone!—Arouse
Thyself, and all those duties now perform,
That are incumbent upon man—his sense,
His reas'ning faculties, activity
Of mind and body, and each varied source
Of being useful to his fellow-man!

* * * *

And now, to rest; I fear I 've wearied you."

Thus having said, she ended her discourse—
They parted for the night.

THE

MINSTREL WANDERER.

CANTO II.

THE

MINSTREL WANDERER.

CANTO II.

" Lagrima ancor non mi bagnava il petto,
Ne rompea il sonno : e quel che 'n me non era,
Mi pareva un miracolo in altrui ! "

PETRARCH.

WITH early dawn the Minstrel rose, and forth
Into the lady's grounds he went. The sun
Had just aris'n; the air above, around,
With freshness, mildness, sweetness was replete;
Upon the grass, in an extended line,
The balmy, fragrant dew-drops glitter'd bright
A thousand ever-changing hues. " Who," said he,
" That having tasted once this pure refreshing air,
And having health and strength to rise and walk,
Would press their couch in listless drowsiness,
In fev'rish dreams, or unrefreshing sleep?

Who, having seen this gorgeous spectacle,
Would voluntary shun the sight again,
Preferring over night to fix their gaze,
Thro' tedious hours, on painted paper scraps,
Or rolling dotted ivory? None, but those
Who ever wish intoxicating joys,
And pass a life of waking, drunken dreams!
They wish, forsooth, for pleasure, comfort, health,
And rush on feverish excitement, noise,
And riot,—Man's a paradox,"—"And woman?"
Said a voice behind:—"A paradise—of Turks!"
He quick replied. "Good morrow, lady; I
Am glad to see, thou canst so early rise."
"I heard thee go," the lady now rejoin'd,
"From out thy chamber, and I surely thought,
That thou contemplatedst escape and flight;
'Twas this arous'd me sooner than my wont,
Nathless, I 'm highly gratified and pleas'd,
And light and buoyant in my spirit feel.
Let us return now to an early meal."

* * * * *

——————The morn's repast was o'er—
The lady then arose and left the room,
But in a little space again appear'd

Requesting that her guest would follow her.
She led the way into her spacious grounds,
And having come unto a fishing pond,
Near which a shady arbour stood, she stopp'd
And took a seat within, and motion'd him
To do the same. A silence short ensued,
Then agitated, trembling, thus began

The Widow's Tale.

——————————" Minstrel,
Th' events of my past life, which I am now
About t' unfold to thee—to thee, the first—
I fear will cost me many a bitter pang,
But, as my word is pass'd, I 'll not recall 't.
—————————— I feel convinc'd,
That if, when stern adversity draws near,
Men were to meet it boldly and resist,
It would be half subdued; but they too oft,
Like trav'llers at th' approach of the Simoom,
Prostrate themselves, until its force be spent;
And oft, when it endureth long, they there
Are smother'd *tamely*, ignominiously!
When *thus* they perish, struggleless and mute,

Beneath the sands of Fortune sinister,
Like those, who flee the conflict and are slain,
Scorn'd and dishonour'd die—their monument
A pyramid of empty words and acts
Heap'd on a base of infamy! If fall
We must, let 's fearless fall, and with our face
Turn'd to our enemy, and leave a name, at least,
For bravery, for energy of mind,
Or for religious fortitude; tho' *here*
I would remark, that some, with deep contempt
I have observ'd, when in a trifling strait,
To ask for aid Divine, nor effort make
To extricate themselves. I would not seem
To breathe a censure on the holy act
Of pray'r for that assistance, which but He
Alone effectually can give; but I have
Conviction firm, that Providence requires
A proper use of all those faculties
And energies with which He has endow'd
And gifted us; else we should soon become
A helpless, or an apathetic race!
This point, I speak more boldly and assur'd
Upon, from personal experience;
For, when my adverse hour came wildly on,

I shrunk, and quickly was borne down; helpless,
When most my aid was needed, I became.
Oh! that I had striv'n, then Heav'n had smil'd
Perchance, and spar'd my darling child!
But I must now commence my narrative,
And not thus, by anticipative breaks,
Perplex my tale. ——————
—————— I was an only child: to me
A mother's tenderness was never giv'n:
The hour, that brought me to this vale of tears,
Convey'd her from it. My sire was, in sooth,
As kind, indulgent, and as truly fond
As ever parent was—e'en now I see
His mild, benignant features, his tall form,
His silv'ry hair:—e'en now I hear his voice,
As gentle, calm, and kind, as charity,
And pure benevolence of heart and mind
Could make it! Never was parent more belov'd
Than he; but, ah! when I was scarce fifteen
He died!——————————
An orphan young and wealthy was I left:
Years roll'd away in pleasures undisturb'd
By scarce one dull reflection of an hour.
The usual rounds of heartless, giddy mirth

I, then, run thro' e'en to satiety.
I had but just been freed the guidance of
My guardians, when, in the sportive throng
Of fashion, pride, and vanity, I met
A kindred soul to mine, Adolphus C———.
To enter on the subject of my thoughts
And feelings then, or to delineate
Those scenes long past, would tear my very soul;
And, unto thee, appear ridiculous
In me, a matron of twoscore, to talk
Of days of youthful love and happiness;
And so, I 'll pass those scenes in silence o'er.
Now, view me as the bride of him I lov'd—
The bright, yet wav'ring glow, that lit our souls,
The hopes and disappointments of young love,
Those wildly rapt'rous dreams, that e'er attend
Engaged attachments, now were sober'd down
Into that matrimonial happiness,
That true domestic comfort, which defies
Descriptive language. In this state, had pass'd
Away near fifteen months—a temp'rate dream—
A time, that glided rapidly and calm
As course of unobstructed rivulet
Thro' verdant meads, and beauteous sylvan scenes.

A son I brought him then, and scarce had I
My chamber left, when woe came pouring in,
Like a rude torrent, o'er my happiness!
But sixteen months a wife I'd been—when oh!
How shall I express the horror of my soul?
My husband's highly cultivated mind
Incipient insanity betray'd!
That malady the worst, that can affect
Mankind! To *friends* it causes anguish deep
To see the mind a drifting, living wreck;
To *relatives* it most heart-rending is;
But, what did *I*, a mother young, a fond
Devoted wife then suffer, when I saw
Adolphus view'd me and my little one
With undisguis'd dislike, avoided us?——
My feelings now, at this sad retrospect,
Compel me to pass o'er, with rapid steps,
That bitter, dread infliction. He was ta'en
Away, and under means restrictive plac'd.——
In a short time a *widow* I became—
That stroke I felt not; it a mercy was.
Five years now pass'd away—my beauteous boy
Grew lovelier, engaging more each day;
My thoughts, my heart, my soul, aye *all* in him

Were cent'red. I heard no other voice—I saw
No other features—knew no other world.
For him alone, I liv'd—he *was* my all!
But oh!——————*He* perish'd!
A fever seiz'd him, and, within a week,
The flame consum'd the vital principle.
The link, that joins the body and the soul,
Was sever'd as the cord that binds to earth
The struggling, fill'd balloon—away flew up
The animating cause, and *I*————
This last afflictive blow me senseless laid
Awhile——I but to consciousness awoke,
When they for ever were about t' enclose,
From view, his earthly form—then I arous'd,
And thus, in lamentation and complaint,
I, o'er his lifeless clay, pour'd loudly forth
My overborne, rebellious soul!————
——————'Now, *all* is o'er—
He ceases to exist! his eyes are clos'd
In deepest and eternal night, and all
Their brilliancy is turn'd to loathsome rust,
By death's fell damp. I fatherless and widow was,
And now my child is dead. By his demise,
Bereft am I of all that urged me on

To drag the links of Life's hard, bitter chain
Thro' days and years of widow'd misery.
Was it for *this*, that I so bravely bore
Those dreadful pangs of Nature at his birth?
For *this*, I nurs'd him, with a care intense?
For this, my bosom was, as blessed sun
And nurt'ring rain are to the flower germ,
Both genial warmth and grateful nourishment?
O lovely bud! that giving promise high
Of beauty and of worth, the sap of life
Did shrink within thee, and the worm of death
Enter'd and prey'd upon thy op'ning bloom!
Whither, ah! whither is departed now
Thy joyous laugh? Must it ne'er flash again
But in my brain? Ah! that I 'd never known
The short-liv'd happiness of maiden love,
The transient, calm, and fond connubial state,
Or e'en maternal extasy! those days
So bright and lovely, that render, now, alas!
My life a hideous and terrific gloom!
O! miniature exact of my heart's lord,
All hope of earthly joy and happiness,
With thee, is fled for ever;———
My little love! my fond, my beauteous boy!

My last and only hope of comfort here,
Thou 'rt taken from me! Pow'r Almighty, Just,
And Wise forgive my querulous despair,
And take me quickly hence, nor, humbly Thee
I beg and fervently implore, protract
A life, thus made a scene so desolate,
So full of agony corporeal,
And mental anguish—a state of dread suspense,
Without a single tie to bind me here.
My soul 's already wean'd from earthly dross,
And struggles to get free from carnal bonds
To join my cherub in the realms above.
But no! I cannot yet escape to him,
Nor join the multitude on earth—a state
As 'twere my very soul suspended was
Midway within the bottomless abyss,
With Heaven's fair view confin'd in upward gaze,
But yawning hell beneath too plainly seen,
Seeming to wait expectant for my fall!
Help! then, O help! Thou merciful Redeemer
Of mankind, and take me to my cherub-boy
And Thee—or him to me restore!
Is not a *mother's* anguish for the dead—
For that to which she gave the principle

Of life, and substance, too, corporeal,
By far more deep, acute, intense than that
Of sisters? Yet the mould'ring grave Thou madst,
Without corruption, yield up Lazarus,
When Mary and when Martha for him mourn'd!'
————————For many, many weeks
Of aught I was not conscious.————Then
An apathetic gloom seiz'd on my soul;
I breath'd, ate, drank, and slept, but all without
Sensation, motive, pleasure, or without
The knowledge scarcely that I did exist;
So much my feelings numb'd and deaden'd were;
So much my once most active soul was chang'd.
I, in impenetrable darkness, liv'd. ————
Religion, once more, placed the living light
Before mine eyes, and I again emerged
As from a sullen, subterranean stream,
Whereon I had been cast, as a torn-up
Blighted flower, and onwards floated had
Without the pow'r to stop or turn aside.
Religion taught me resignation; it
Did also me endue with fortitude
To bear th' inflictions of just Providence.
Grateful, most truly grateful, now, am I,

I went not from this world all unprepar'd
To meet the Bridegroom when the cry resounds
'He cometh!' If, in my state of apathy,
I had departed, wanting oil to trim
My lamp, think of my utter, endless shame
And woe! And, Minstrel, think—*think* also *thou*
Of this and thine own state!————
My sad relation, now, is o'er.—Judge not
I 'm anxious to require thy history;
To-morrow we will here again repair,
And if you *still* an inclination feel
To tell thy tale, in confidence, to me,
Begin it, then, or when you equal feel
To go throughout the task. I deem your health
Is, now, by no means equal to endure
Severe distress of mind, therefore postpone
Thy narrative until thou 'rt more robust.
I feel a strong and fix'd presentiment,
That the excitement will thee overcome,
And so be prejudicial to thy health,
Of which thou shouldst be careful, ere too late.
This world, its miseries, and woes are nought
T' escape, if we 're unable to avoid
That endless and unutterable state

Of woe and torment in our after-life!
Be strong, have patience, hope, and fortitude,
And all will yet be well! You have declared,
You care not for the world's opinions,
Which others sway and influence, with hand
Of stern, unsparing pressure, and prevent
Repentance and reform, or, in other words,
Confessing openly, that they have hitherto
In error been. If so, begin anew
Thy life: put thy whole trust in Him who will
Deliver thee from mental wretchedness
And retrospection's fell, encircling grasp!
This life, my friend, is merely as a Book,
A large-typed, narrow-margin'd folio,
Which as you turn its leaves from right to left,
(The present and the future to the past)
They one upon the other close for aye,
And form a hidden mass of solid dreams!
Its "*Title-page*" in baptism we view;
Its "*Preface*," childhood; "*Introduction*," youth;
Its middle pages, the middle ages;
Old age, "*Conclusion*;" and its "*Finis*," death!"

* * * * *

* * * * *

The next eve found the Minstrel Wanderer
Seated beside his hostess generous,
In the same arbour as preceding day.
His faithful dog was lying at his feet,
Most wistful gazing in his master's face.
The Minstrel to the arbour had convey'd
His harp, and placed it now before him. He
Appear'd much agitated in his thoughts,
As if debating in his mind a point
Of deepest import. Sunken tho' his eye,
'Twas now lit up with more than usual fire.
——————— At length "'Tis done!"
He said, "The hour is come! but how, ah! how
Shall I commence this record of the past?
And shall I fail, when I've already had,
What coward Nero at his death desir'd,
A pattern and example set him? Mine
Has been most nobly given unto me
By one of that sex bound we are to guide,
Support, protect, and cherish. Fie on it!
I'm like a timid maiden cross'd in love,
And wish to quit the world, and memory,
And die in soft euthanasy! ————

Now memory unload; give forth thy long
Accumulated stores of poisonous
And fell ingredients! ————
How much the memories of human-kind
Vary in their capacity and state.
Some, sponges-like, absorb and eke retain
The moisture of immersions, even to
Repletion, and that which comes from it
Flows purer far than when 't was first received,
Allowing that it can be purified:
Some, to those sandy soils, may be compar'd,
That drink all up, that into them is pour'd,
But nought, worth mentioning, preserves;
Some, more than one idea ne'er can hold,
Which, like the pellet of a school-boy's gun,
The last received the former will expel.
And some are like the spheric billiard-ball,
That rolls and rolls, and never gathers aught,
But rather rubs away that which it hath,
Its polish and its artificial hue.
And *mine* —— the bee, from every flower whereon
It doth alight, extracts some essence sweet
Or useful—*my* memory from each circumstance,
And contact, sucks the gall and bitterness!

The Minstrel's Tale.

Well may the noble, matchless, poet say
'*There is no joy this world can give like that*
It takes away!' * *I* ne'er experienced
A mental feeling, that will more distress,
Or more corroding agony inflict,
Than retrospective thoughts of happiness
And joys for ever gone! ————
Not the self-gratulation that we feel
After escaping dangers imminent,
Or threatened woe,—the natural delight
Resulting from complete possession of
Long-sought yet unexpected happiness,—
Nor the most fond anticipations of
Renown, aggrandizement, or wealth, e'er can
Compensate for that loneliness of heart,
That bitterness of soul, that we, at times,
Endure when glancing back upon those days
Of youthful, fervid, unalloy'd delight,
Which down the stream of Time have flow'd, and now,

* Byron.

Beyond our grasp, recal, or gaze, have pass'd
Into the ocean of Eternity!
——————— Deem me not rude,
If, when narrating my sad history,
I should too frequently apostrophize;
Or if, when much excited by some thought
Of harsh or gentle nature, I give vent
To my rous'd soul. ———————
To all, as in my view, their shadows pass,
Their words or deeds, their enmity or love,
I individually dedicate
A verse unpolished, yet expressive of
My feelings. This indulgence, tho' perhaps
Pernicious in its nature to my health,
Is yet the sole enjoyment that I feel,
Or I indulge in. ——— Madam,
My grief commenc'd or ere my youth had ceas'd,
And it has tinctur'd all my after-life.
Do not expect a history replete
With trials and calamitous events:
My misery hath chiefly been brought on,
Or heightened been, from an infected source,
An early grievous, and afflictive blight,
To which I trace a blurr'd and tainted mind.

My bane has been a quick perceptive sense
Of slight, distrust, or insult from the world—
My breast has been a haven for regrets,
And retrospective grief—Unhappiness
Has been too quickly seen and felt—Despair
Too easily admitted in my mind—
Contempt and deep disgust for words and deeds
Too readily indulged in, when I thought
They were absurd, or inconsistent with
The noble nature, character, that man,
The image of his great Creator, has,
(Or ought) to e'er maintain. With feelings such
As these, I after found, I never could
A place subordinate retain. 'Tis said,
(But much I question the authority)
That any man can make his state in life,
How humble it may be, respectable,
And if possessed of talents, gain respect:
Such might have been the case in former days,
When such a spirit of exclusiveness
Existed not, as now; but in these days,
If one of great ability and worth,
But wanting fortune, noble birth, or friends,
Should but attempt to raise himself a *caste*,

He 'll soon, by them, be cast within the pale
Of that society, their arrogance
And narrow-prejudice may deem most fit
And suitable the *office* that he holds,
Or income he enjoys. ———————
Now hear my tale, and may it little trust
Teach those, that may hereafter hear it told,
To place in present circumstance, and may
It also all a timely warning give,
To chasten and to moderate their hope,
Should they be young and Fortune's favorite.
The wand'ring wretch, that now addresses you,
From earliest youth has been unfortunate;
Coldly have I been glanced upon by those
Whom, previously, inferior to myself
I deem'd; and spurn'd by those with whom of yore
I mingled oft. Nurs'd in the lap of Ease,
Of baleful Plenty, and of wanton Mirth,
My youth was as the swallow's rapid flight
Over a lake upon a summer's day,
Oft dipping in his rapid, sportive wing,
Still gliding on with meteoric speed
O'er the calm surface; but the utmost verge
I reached not, Icarian was my fate. ———

Bright and as vivid as the comet's course,
And more belov'd than wealth, or glory's dream,
Wilder and prouder than young Ammon's horse,
And transient as December's sunny beam,
Is youth's illusive state—our golden age,
When hope and pleasure ev'ry thought engage.

Each scene is view'd with a resolv'd content,
The heart with every trifling wish complies,
We rove from flow'r to flow'r uncloy'd, unspent,
Like to the happy sunbeam butterflies:
E'en change is pleasing tho' it worse appears,
An April-time, made up of smiles and tears!

Too old to feel as children in the dark,
Too young of woe to think, or even dream,
We cast both heart and soul in pleasure's bark,
And fearless venture down Time's rapid stream:
The light of love then dawns upon the soul,
And Earth's a circus—*Woman* for the goal!

But when Youth's fervour's past, and care succeeds,
'Tis baneful retrospection, then, annoys,
By showing in her mirror our young deeds,
With all their pleasing evanescent joys:

Oh! better far had joyous Youth ne'er been,
Or, that we could forget each youthful scene!

The days of Youth!—the fragments of a wreck,
  Which float afar upon the Ocean's face,
Each portion forming but a little speck,
  Which here and there with bitter grief we trace:
Yet, when these parts together were allied,
What festive scenes they bore upon the tide!

Ah! Youth so lov'd, so idolized—Farewell!
  Ye rapid years, ye momentary days!
Why should I on thy beams reflective dwell,
  Sithence I cannot grasp thy fleeting rays?
For ever, then,—Oh! language fails, to tell
The throbbing anguish in that word—Farewell!

  A youth of pleasure, or of indolence,
Creates an after-life of vain regret,
And bitter care. Our most eventful time
Is that which oft elapses from the hour
We quit our tutor's care, until the time
We enter upon man's sedate career,
In some profession. If in indolence,

Or dissipation it be spent, no time
Of life will prove to us pernicious more
Than that—Ay, ruinous, destructive more
Than all our previous, or after-deeds;
The seeds of future vice then sow themselves
In a prolific soil. The minds of youth
Should be with care directed, or be led,
Not left alone, neglected, nor yet *driv'n*.
They are like boats, which may be led, or drawn
As fast as, and in what direction, you
Deem fit, but if you try to push and drive
Them on with violence, they 'll surely '*yaw*,'
And never keep the course you purpos'd them.
The mind of youth is as the fresh-pull'd quill—
Each is, when properly prepar'd and shap'd,
For lawyer, for physician, or divine,
Well qualified; but if we view them both,
Of preparation or of shaping void,
They are but only fit to be employ'd
As petty brooms, or stuck in shuttlecocks,
For ever to be bandied to and fro,
At other persons' sole control and will—
To be their slave, their pastime, or amusement!
I am the victim of an ill-spent youth ——

I, utterly unused to worldly ways,
(The mode of getting or of saving wealth)
With Hope's deceptive and misleading light,
Dazzling my youthful inexperienced sight,
Grew up the slave of expectations false,
And nearly came to years deem'd proper to
Embark on the unruly sea of life,
Without or skill to steer, or nerve to stem
An adverse wind or wave, should it approach.
And so it did befal!—A storm arose—
Stern, froward Fate scowl'd dark and blew a blast,
So loud and terrible, that in my ears
It ringeth still! ———————
Myself like to a bark, a harbour-craft,
Which to the parent-hulk had been fast lash'd
E'er since its being launch'd upon Life's tide,
Now, as the gale increas'd, the moorings of
The hulk, by constant, lengthened use being worn,
Gave way! ———————————
A shore of wreck and ruin, like a shark
Greedy and ravenous for sailor's corpse,
Waited impatient to commence its work
Of desolation. The aged hulk, alas!

To pieces went, and *never* floated more—
The bark (myself) was shatter'd greatly, but
The hull of it, tho' injur'd much, still floats,
The waves oft dashing 'bove the streak of Hope!
O! that it would rise to its own proper draught,
Or settle in Eternity's abyss! ——
Nay, if I speak too allegorical,
I will relate my tale in plainer terms;
But such has ever been the way o' th' world,
To clothe unpleasant thoughts, or words, or deeds
In any manner, save their native garb;
And 't is but gilding o'er a bitter pill,
Or sweetening a nauseous potion—but, *you'll* say,
'Tis but deferring of the evil hour,
The playing with a fish, or ere you drown.
And so I'll recommence ————————
When young, none e'er was happier than I,
Light was my heart, my spirit uncontroll'd,
No cares, no wants unsatisfied, all, *all*
Conduc'd to make my happiness complete.
A joyous happy home, and pleasant grounds,
With other gifts of Providence benign,
In keeping suitable. ————————

O! when again shall I thee see,
My native place so fondly lov'd,
And view those scenes, with thoughts as free
As, once, when midst thy sweets I rov'd?
Ah, never!

My home now rises to my view,
Bedeck'd with scenes endear'd and bless'd—
Ah! torturing vision why do you
Mock me with what I once possess'd,
Thus, ever?

I cannot view thee as of yore I view'd,
Buoyant with hope and present happiness,
I cannot strive, as when with youth endued
I beat aside the waves of wretchedness—
Ah, never!

Ah, spot belov'd! to thee yet cleaves
My heart, for still thou 'rt fresh and gay,
But, oh, those feelings!—last year's leaves—
Fallen, decay'd, and past away,
For ever!

——————— In those days I had
A sire, mother, sisters, relatives,
Acquaintance, much-lov'd friends all kind and true:
I thought *their* friendship and *their* love,
Whatever might ensue, would last for aye,
In adverse, as in prosperous days and years—
I deem'd them all sincere—friends, relatives,
Acquaintance—at least in their professions all
Suffice it me to say, I found them *then*
All ready, courteous, attentive, good ——
Our family was then, a commonwealth
Of happiness, our sire the guide, the judge
And president of all our words and acts.
He deeply was esteem'd by all that knew
His talent, and his merit, and his worth.
There was not aught on earth that could increase
Our stock of true domestic happiness;
Time was immers'd and lost in liquid joys,
I slept to dream of fresh discover'd plans
Of pleasure, rose to taste and prove them!
Oh God! am *I* the being that was once
Almost etherial in spirit, and in frame?
I, now, a creeping, crawling, nervous thing;
A whining, heartless, and desponding man

At thirty?—Tush!—and *what* the cause of this?
Shame, misery, and degradation! ——
All now are lost! Home, friends, and happiness,
At one fell swoop, were snatch'd from me for ever!
E'en as the lark that erewhile caroll'd loud,
In elevated joy and mirthfulness,
By the devouring hawk is pounc'd upon,
And hurl'd a bleeding victim to the ground!
Oh! bitter hour of anguish!—Must I tell
Each blist'ring circumstance?—Must I ———?
I will!—e'en though the pois'nous, cursed tale
Should fester on my tongue! ————
Ere I had yet at man's estate arriv'd,
My honored father, who for forty years
Had blameless serv'd his sovereign and state,
Holding an office of some trust and pow'r,
Was suddenly accus'd, attach'd, *disgrac'd!*—
Compell'd to flee, and hide his aged head
From public shame and ignominy!—Now
Depicture to yourself your old, infirm,
And helpless parents cast out on the world—
Sent forth, at the eleventh hour of life,
To struggle hard against adversity,
And poverty, and deepest misery! —

Depict your sisters, suff'ring from ill-health,
Worn out with care, all helpless from their sex
And gentle nurture, now constrain'd to seek
An humbler home, to live, in hopeless state
Alas! their natural term of life! ———
Oh! what a withering blighting blast was this!
'Twas sudden, mighty, and o'erpowering,
As the resistless, choking, fell Simoom!
O! my much honor'd, deeply injur'd sire,
Whose mortal relics now repose in dust,
Free from averted looks, and pity's sneer,
How did I grieve to see thee in a state
Unworthy of thy highly gifted mind,—
To view thee sinking into deepest gloom!
Despoil'd of hope, O! what is there on earth
That tasteth sweet, or even palatable? 'Tis
A felon's doomed life, with no reprieve
From torture mental and corporeal,
But what the gloomy King of Terrors gives.
Ach'd has my heart with deepest agony,
When on parents' fall and ruin too
I silently reflected; his loss of health,
His living secluded, 'barr'd society:
Like wounded bird, when he no more can trust

To his light wing, for safety or for food,
Some dark recess seeks out and silent mopes,
Brooding in agony o'er his recent loss! —
For more than forty sun's he served the state,
And his inventive talent well employ'd,
All for his country's use, and others' gain,
And yet he so ill repaid—But, 'tis past!
He sunk at last, and broken-hearted, blind,
T' imprudence and severity a prey! And yet,
These ruthless, reckless, selfish men in pow'r
Are call'd our *Guardians*—'*Guardians of the State!*'
Remorseless men, that without justice rule—
Rigid alone to those who have not birth,
Nor title, nor the means justice to blind.
Ye, *ye* are they, who truly rob the state,
In being paid for useless services;
Nay worse than useless, venal and unjust!
Ye whose merit's, like the venom of the toad,
And skill like adder's sting—pernicious, fell,
And pois'nous to them, who call them forth!
Ye, who rule the faithful, old, and diligent,
That toil beneath you, with a rod of iron!
Had *ye* no *beam* to cast out from your eye,

Ere ye could spy a *mote* in an old man's,
That had grown grey and feeble serving you?
Shame be on you all! Mediate could none
For him, so as to hinder his grey hairs
From going down in sorrow to the grave?
The time may come, when *ye* may ask in vain,
Ye merciless exactors of an unjust pow'r
At the tribunal of an all-just God!

* * * * * *

As children's circle, form'd of wither'd leaves,
Before the tempest's rage abroad doth fly,
So now became all scatter'd and dispers'd
The members that compos'd our commonwealth.
'Twas now I felt ingratitude from those
By blood connected, and *relations* term'd
(Tho' no relation have their deeds to the name)
They, now, forsooth, scarce knew I ever liv'd
In any sphere above my present state;
Or if they knew me, 'twas to know me not
When and where'er we after chanced to meet.
O Cicero! thou knew'st and well describ'dst
Those swallow friends and their faint hollow hearts!*

* "Ut hirundines æstivo tempore præstò sunt, frigore pulsæ recedunt; ita *falsi amici*, sereno vitæ tempore præstò sunt, simul atque hyemem fortunæ viderint, avolant omnes!"

There were amongst these *friends* some relatives,
Who, when they 'd previous felt adversity,
Had from my sire receiv'd assistance great:
And these, who had, by frequent loans, conduced
To hasten ruin unto us and death to him,
When that a little portion of their aid
I needed in return, they then, forsooth,
Tender'd advice, reproach'd, avoided me,
As though a leprosy were in my touch;
Or, that I bore about Medusa's head
To turn their bodies into stone as well as hearts!—
Or if perchance they did dole out their mite,
It was with many a frigid apophthegm
About '*repeated obligations*' oft
Were irksome, or with sarcastic apathy,
That nugatory render'd what they'd done.
And yet, they are religious! religious
To the chine, in outward form! ———
O! execrable cant, and curs'd hypocrisy!
Religion without e'en humanity,
Or gratitude, nay, scarce a feeling for
Another in distress and misery.
The scripture saith, that charity will hide
A multitude of sins—*their* evil deeds

Will never have *that* virtue to redeem,
Or counterbalance, in the hour of need.
These are your gloomy sad religionists,
A sect of modern Heracliti, who
Appear as wretched and as dull, as if
They had just come from dark Trophonius' cave.
These, not content with faces nature gave,
Distort,* and pull them, till they emulate
The highly celebrated ugliness
Of Florence's Baronci, in Boccaccio's time.
These are they, that worship their Creator
With torrents of set phrases, long-drawn pray'rs,
And loud, sonorous drawling, as if they
Did really think, the Deity should be
Ador'd and worshipp'd but by tongue and lungs,
And not by heart and mind, that their thanksgifts
And pray'rs are to be wafted up on high
As we see children lather-bubbles do,
By dint of *breath!* Language 's the medium
Of intercourse between mankind and man;
God knows and reads the heart! †—So much for those

* 6 Matt. v. 16. † 6 Matt. v. 5—8.

Term'd relatives—Let none hereafter boast,
That he connected is by *blood* to one,
For, consanguinity will never add
One link unto a chain, that is, e'en then,
Too short to bind their sep'rate interests.
What could I hope from *friends*, (at least those, that
We so *denominate)* in my distress?—
They all, like uncleans'd wheat, had heretofore
Been only tried in weather calm and mild:
The heap seem'd large indeed, for chaff from wheat
(Emblems most true of false and faithful friends)
I could not yet, with certainty, descry,
When came misfortune, like a strong east-wind,
And blew the light and husky parts away,
Leaving few solid grains of hope for me.
One was as rare as purest diamond,
In value far surpassing all the rest,
That stood Misfortune's test.
She was indeed a *friend*—an Oasis
In the desert of my barren pilgrimage.
When some did shun me as a pestilence,
And others but a lukewarm int'rest show'd,
She still advis'd, consol'd, abode by me,

Like as the ivy round the blasted oak,
When ev'ry leaf has fallen one by one,
It closely clings, nor heeds the raging storm,
But with a freshness gay and evergreen
The withered tree bedecks. She, of religion
Ne'er made parade or boast; it was not made
Of heartless, outward, ceremonious forms,
Nor self-denying, rigid, and austere
Demeanour. Her's was religion of the heart,
Which bade her charity and tolerance to use
Tow'rds all, and made her mind as calm and free
As hope and self-approving conscience could
Conduce and render it. Religion her
Did pleasing, cheerful make, as native scenes
Revisited in spring!

With some religion is but as a trade,
But not to *thee* could such a charge be laid;
Bigots and hypocrites excite disgust,
And turn a saving creed into a sad mistrust.

Religion such as thine, so pure, so holy,
Nor stained with pride, nor tinged with melancholy,
Where faith is shown by charitable ways,
Calls forth our imitation and our praise.

And *why* should we be gloomy, or despise
The good gifts of a Being just and wise,
As He sends happiness of ev'ry kind,
Ungrateful is the heart, that 's link'd with gloomy mind!

The scene soon changed—I was born
To be unfortunate; fated, alas!
To tread this world alone friendless, and free
From ev'ry social tie. This comfort sole,
Her tutelary friendship, was withdrawn
From me. Ah! sick'ning is the retrospect,
She left me to my fate!—yet she chang'd not
In friendship towards me, she chang'd but as
The ivy-leaf, which, when it changes, dies!—
Oh! what a wearying time of agony
Was this? ——— Fell sickness came and damp'd
My dearest, fondest hopes—then Death her seiz'd!
———————— O! thou relentless pow'r,
Who spar'st nor virtue, wit, nor Beauty's bloom,
Thou com'st as sturdy as the mower's scythe,
In gay enamell'd mead, and cuttest down
The fairest, sweetest flowers of the field,

In all their prime and beauty. She, upon
The anniversary of her birth, expir'd.
——— In the realms of bliss,
Before the awful throne of the Most High,
If there be any station more divine,
In glory more excelling, which confers
A greater portion of beatitude
Than any other——if, in those abodes
Of splendour dazzling, endless, and supreme,
A diadem be worn, and which bestows
Pre-eminence 'mongst angels—Eternal pow'r,
Grant unto her that station and that crown!

Alas, she is from hence for ever gone!
Never as mortals shall we see her more,
And never on these eyes again will dawn
Heart, mind, and form like those which she
once bore.

Her talents and accomplishments above
The usual standard of her sex's skill—
To lend assistance constantly she strove
To those depress'd by any worldly ill.

All 's lost with her, that gave to life a zest,
My hope, my trust, my tutelary guide;
And nought remains within my joyless breast
But dull cold apathy and fallen pride!

Yet cruel 'tis and selfish to repine,
Her trials and her sufferings were great;
Her ashes rest in peace—and oh, may mine
As her soul fitting be for Heav'nly state!

High Heav'n's decrees tho' dark are ever just,
And mortals sway'd by ordination wise,
For when the good are seen consign'd to dust
The unprepar'd are warn'd to fit them for the skies!

When *she* was gone, then all to me seem'd lost,
The balm of life, sweet Hope, my bosom fled!
——————— My life became
E'en as the track of some stray wounded leech,
Across a sanded floor—my days and nights,
The stretches and contractions of that poor
Crush'd worm, performed in utter hopelessness
And agony! ———————————

Months pass'd away a dreary vacuum.

* * * * * *

After this blow,—as if I 'd not endur'd
Enough from other causes—I was made
To suffer long, and most unjustly too,
In th' estimation of the family
Of her so lately lost (my only friends
Now left, and whom I much esteem'd and lov'd);
And through the cursed calumnies of one,
(A vulgar, ignorant, yet wily knave)
Who, being link'd by marriage to one
Of that most worthy much respected house,
Basely employ'd that tie to vilify,
By whisperings, my name. The way in which
He won his suit, to me seem'd ever strange:
At first, she deeply hated him—and do
Whate'er he would, in her affections, he
No progress e'er could make. She oft remark'd,
His form, to her, transpicuous appear'd,
Thro' which a loathsome skeleton she saw,
And heart corrupt and poisonous to her.
His fix'd and untir'd look, tho' e'er as kind
And as respectful too, as would permit
The nature of the man, was painful unto her.

With dread instinctive and dislike, I've seen
Her flee the garden to avoid his sight,
Which, as a serpent's steady, baleful gaze
Upon a hapless bird, to her appear'd.
She tried to flee, but merely she revolv'd
Around him; ever attempting to escape
His glance, yet ev'ry revolution, that
She made, did tend to shorten and decrease
The radius that extended from his eyes
To her—the centripetal force increas'd,
The centrifugal faint and fainter grew.
At length worn out by assiduity,
By wily persevering constancy,
She calmly yielded to the basilisk,
And put herself within the dreaded sphere
Of his curs'd influence—gave herself up—
Coil after coil he folded round her heart,
She his was 'gainst her judgment, 'gainst her wish,
Tho' with a dread instinctive all the while,
Of some foreboding evil, early death,
Or woe unbounded he to her would bring.
——— For a length of time,
He was triumphant to his heart's content,
In his calumnious delusive arts.

He, without energy of mind the least,
Or courage physical, contriv'd by wiles,
By curs'd insinuations and deceit,
To blast my reputation, and to add
Another source of deep unhappiness
To my distress and state unfortunate—
To cause as 't were another stream to flow
Into a river that already was
Too rapid, and o'erflowing its worn banks,
And spreading desolation far and near.
And yet this man extenuates his acts—
He calls himself respectable, and writes
Himself a *gentleman!*—because, he wants
Not means t' indulge his sensual appetites.
To thee, thou coward, striker in the dark,
Thou whisperer away of men's fair fame,
This—

Thou think'st thyself a *gentleman*, forsooth,
And so thou art, e'en *I* will speak that truth—
Gentle thou art when courage should be shown,
And *man* thou art, because thou 'rt now full-grown!

My spirit with an empty epigram

Is not content—again then, this to thee,
Thou true stamp of a lie personified!
Aid me, this once, my Muse, if ne'er again
Thou wilt befriend me! Thou, too, my good harp,
Lend me thy boldest, most decided tone!

For thee, my deep and rooted scorn,
No words can fully to the sense convey;
Conceiv'd in spite, in malice born,
In each friend's side a fest'ring thorn,
Self is thy God, and all mankind thy prey!

Slander most foul, and calumny,
Are thine own attributes, and hateful lust,
Which not thy deep hypocrisy
Could hide the time of decency,
But burst whilst "*mourning*" her consign'd to dust!

A putrid corpse I 'd rather be,
Feeding the hideous and loathsome worm,
Than be an abject *thing* like thee,
With thought, nor word, nor action free,
Cringing for smiles, and crouching to a spurn!

A fish will writhe when cast ashore,
  Wild beasts from fire will turn and flee,
And rabid dogs the stream abhor,
But ah! abhorrent more, far more
  Than these to them art *thou* to *me!*

Madam, I pray you to excuse my warmth?
My feelings, my resentment, my disdain
Have hurried me, I fear, beyond the bounds
Of Christian charity, and e'en good sense.
——— Howe'er, after a lapse of time,
I, once again, my name redeem'd—and he
Was openly expos'd! He show'd himself
In his true garb, his native hideousness;
Death burst the bond, that had together held
Souls in their nature uncongenial;—
They found him all I 'd stated him to be.
Poor Maddeline! little indeed hadst thou
Of worldly happiness, but much, alas!
Of suffering and trial! May Heav'n's rest
Be thine!

Again the funereal knell has toll'd,
  And God, who gave, did now again require,

The heavenly tenant of an earthly mould
To join, we trust, His bless'd angelic choir.

Then why bend o'er an empty tenement?
Why yield to grief reflection should assuage?
Her pain is o'er, her anguish now is spent,
And Heaven's Recorder, now, has clos'd her page!

Would we, if we 'd escaped from cell and rack,
And did now wander free midst genial climes,
Be pleas'd should our companions call us back
To share their prison, sufferings, and crimes?

Instead of unavailing, selfish grief,
That would recall her to a life of pain,
Let us great God implore to let her leaf
Be balanced so, that Heaven's bliss she gain!

——————— I, after this sad loss,
A deed committed that I 've never ceased
To feel most deeply, and its remembrance now
Both shame and anguish cause.———————
I had conceiv'd myself insulted by

One, who had my companion been in youth.
He saw my reckless and desponding mood,
And tried to rouse me out of it; at first
By hints, and then by steady firm reproach.
He censur'd me for helplessness and sloth—
I, with recriminative charge, did taunt—
He was arous'd and struck me. I would not take,
When afterwards we met, with each a "*friend*,"
His offer'd hand; nor his apology,
And deep contrition for the deed accept.
He fell —— and after ling'ring months in pain
He died!—I fled, and never to the place
Return'd again. But oh, what torturing hours
Has conscience given! My means of life were lost,
And shortly after I, with poverty,
And want, and vice encompass'd was. When in
Prosperity, with equally as much
Of nausea guilt is rejected by
Our high proud mind, as by our pamper'd maw
Is coarse offensive food: but well am I
Convinced, the depths of poverty induce,
By creeping, and by catenarian links,
A loss of candour and ingenuousness,
Then malversation, infamy, and crime.

Mankind, when out of temper with the world,
Are glad to find an opportunity,
Excuse, or cause, to render up themselves
To headlong vicious courses and pursuits,
As being easier than the uphill path
Of virtue. Ah, how falsely uphill deem'd!
They having sunk and lowered deep themselves
In guiltiness, indulgence, or despair
In Providence! And here I would observe,
That he, who basely renders up himself,
(As I did once, and *now* I feel my fault,)
To indolence, despair, and apathy,
Sooner or later, by the sight, is struck
Of ruin to disease link'd fast, and o'er
Him hanging, as did Dionysius' sword
Appear suspended, by a single hair,
Above the head of Damocles. ———
——————— I feel
I must conclude my tale, and briefly too—
Goaded thus by misery and shame,
Defam'd and vilified by hypocrites
At home, and whining catharists abroad,
And haunted by misfortune day and night
Where'er I dwelt—I then resolv'd, and bound

Myself by oath to wander for a year
And day; and having learnt the lyric art
When young, I, all the time I stroll'd, received
Civility and welcome 'neath the roof
Of a new nightly host.—Tho' ready cheer
And welcome I have met, yet sympathy
From none, save thee, have I received; for which
Accept my fervent, heartfelt gratitude!
My wand'rings now are o'er, and with them, too,
My sufferings on earth will shortly be.
Like as to them who long have toil'd and watch'd,
Unconquerable yawning is of sleep
The sure precursor, so doth, o'er my soul,
The gaping drowsiness of death o'erspread.
I certain am, my hour of rest draws nigh,
When cold or heat, hunger or thirst, no more
Will this corporeal frame affect. I feel,
That e'en an infant in arithmetic,
My days to number would not be perplex'd.
And now, permit me, Madam, to withdraw;
I am exhausted quite, and all unfit
For further converse. More I had to say,
If that my strength would suffer me to do't;
But no, I can no farther go. Here ends

My tale. To-morrow—but no more—
Good night, kind lady; may Heaven's benizon
For ever be upon thee!" ————————
He here concluded, and within the house
They went, and after slight refreshment, he
Retir'd to his chamber with his dog. ———

* * * * * *

———— But half the night had pass'd away,
When something heavy in the Minstrel's room
Was heard to fall—and after howl'd a dog
Most piteously. The Lady quick arose,
And donn'd her clothes, and hasted to his door,
At which she rapped both loud and frequently,
Then call'd the Minstrel—but the sole reply
Was the unceasing howling of the dog.
The Lady was alarm'd, and in all haste
She called her young companion to her aid;
The door they open forced, and enter'd in,
And on the floor beheld the Minstrel stretch'd
All still and motionless! His faithful dog
Beside him stood — he whined — then lick'd his hand—
Then pull'd him by the clothes, but finding all
Of no avail, he long and loudly howl'd

Again, then mutely laid him down beside
The Wanderer. The Minstrel, from his chair
Had fall'n; his couch he had not visited.
He had been writing, and apparently
Had finish'd, and had laid his pen aside.
A locket fill'd with light brown glossy hair,
Suspended by a riband from his neck,
Was clench'd within his hand—his face was calm.
The Lady then her servants summon'd quick,
And with a sadden'd voice and tearful eye,
Bade them perform the last sad offices
To the deceas'd. She left the room, and took
The paper whereupon the Minstrel had
Been writing. ——————————
Thus had he written with his latest strength:

"Lady most kind, the heavy hand of death
Is now upon me hard: I felt its cold
Benumbing influence, when I my narrative
Had nearly finish'd, and it hurried me
To an abrupt conclusion; still I thought
The lamp of life might be kept burning on
Until the morrow, or perchance the next
Succeeding day, if, with the oil of rest

I fed and nourish'd it. But ah! my friend,
I now am well convinced it is not so
To be—I cannot rest. I wish my life
Protracted could have been a few days more,
For I had much to impart, and to request.
I now must hasten to the points I wish
To touch upon, before the tide of life
Shall cease to ebb, and dread eternity
Begin to flow. Never, ah, never shall
I see thee more! I would not harass thee
With vain and useless 'tendance upon me,
And so I told thee not my state. It would
Have futile been, th' attempt to feed
With care the flick'ring and expiring flame,
When all the wick, the stamina's consum'd
And gone. ——— The summons dread
Has suddenly arrived, and suddenly
Will answer'd be. Before th' approaching morn
In brightness breaks on thee, this form of mine
Will pallid, pulseless, rigid, and supine
Be stretch'd—then, this torturing memory
Will calm and still for ever be! ———
I am indifferent about my resting-place;—
With my remains do as you may think fit;

That disposal of them, which will give
To you less trouble than another, I
Would wish you to adopt it. If a plan
I may suggest?—Let this frail tenement
Of flesh at day-break be interr'd, without
Or pomp or ceremony (save the rites
Of our most pure religion) in the most
Obscure and unfrequented spot of earth,
The churchyard of this village doth retain.
I wish nor epitaph, nor name, nor stone
To mark my grave; but should *you* otherwise
Desire, direct and order as you please;
You may, by searching 'mongst my papers, find
An epitaph. ——————————
There are some persons who do entertain
Strange fantasies about their *rotting-place.*
Many, in all respects beside, are free
From superstitious weakness, yet, to this
In reference, evince anxiety
Preposterous. Some with ambitious views,
Or with unconquerable longing wish
That their aristocratic bones may rot,
And crumble into dust and nothingness
In Westminster's grand Abbey, in St. Paul's,

Or other edifice episcopal.
Whilst others seem most seriously to think
Their final, dreamless sleep would restless be
Save with their long-drawn line of ancestors
In their own "*family vault;*" imagining,
I should suppose, that when deposited
With their remains, they will arise and greet
The newly-enter'd member of their club,
Then on their coffins sit, and constitute
A coterie eternal and *select!*
Some nations have embalm'd their dead, and some
Have dried and kept them upon racks, and some
In chrystal and in glass have long preserv'd
The fairest forms*, and some in spirits have
Their dead retain'd.— They, who wish their bones
And mortal relics to be kept entire,
Or they, who dread all molestation, still
Connect the soul with senseless, putrid clay.
But, let these anxious and uneasy minds
But reason with themselves, let them but ask

* "Les Egyptiens ont fait aussi, pour conserver leurs morts, *des caisses de verre.*"—De Pauw.

He mentions, in another place, a kind of transparent substance, which the Egyptians used for the same purpose, and which was frequently taken for glass.

Themselves as I do now—Can, I enquire,
The freed and mounting butterfly perceive
The crushing of the chrysalitic husk
From which it yesterday emerged? Or can
The volant, soaring lark, or know or feel
The crumbling of the shell, which once contain'd
His now emancipated form? No!
Nor can the freed, emancipated soul
Perceive, or feel the least, though man, or beast,
Or bird, or fish, should piecemeal tear his frame!*
Men may as well be anxious for their clothes,
And for their preservation after death,
As for the flesh and bones that clad their soul!
All lifeless bodies into nothingness
Or sooner must, or later be reduc'd;
The clay of poverty, and toil, and age,
As well as youth's and beauty's porcelain,
Are heriots all to our own self-begot,
Vermicular lords of the manor!——
It matters not a jot, whether we go

* "Diogenes rogatus, quemadmodum sepeliri vellet; projici se jussit inhumatum. Tum, amici: Volucribusne et feris? Minimè verò, inquit: sed bacillum, propter me, quo abigam, ponitote. Quî poteris? illi dixerunt; non enim senties. Quid igitur mihi ferarum laniatus oberit, nihil sentienti?"

To our last bed, with apoplexy fat,
Or from consumption lean, pallid from wounds,
Or from fell poison livid—we shall prove,
In either case, an equally acceptable
Nutritious food to worms!———————
Farewell! I now must lay aside my pen,
Ere it shall drop, and patient wait my hour.
Life's ebbing fast; let me have your prayers!
My faithful dog I unto thee bequeath,
My harp I also leave thee:—hereafter, if
There should enquiry be made for me,
Show *her*—for there will be but one—my place
Of rest. May Heaven protect and bless thee!
Fare thee well!"———————————

* * * * * * *

The mortal relics of our Minstrel, now,
Repose beneath the shade of cypress trees,
All young and lately planted there, by her,
Who was his last and only friend on earth.
His name a mystery doth still remain—
His epitaph, as written by himself,
And found among his papers after death,
Runs thus upon the headstone of his grave:

The Minstrel Wanderer.

Æt. 30.

Here lie beneath, O man! the bones of one
Who was, in youth, girt in by sorrow's zone.
He, having early lost bright Fortune's rays,
Was destitute of any deed of praise;
Devoid of fame, devoid of worldly pride,
He useless lived to man, and nameless died!
Yet, Reader, breathe a pray'r for his soul's rest,
And that he may be pardon'd and be bless'd!

THE END.

J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT-STREET.